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The Cave

A Comedy in 3 Acts

The Woman's Masquerade

A Comedy in 1 Act

Nora Del Smith

6818

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THE CAVE

(A COMEDY IN THREE ACTS)

AND

THE WOMAN'S MASQUERADE

(A COMEDY IN ONE ACT)

BY

NORA DEL SMITH

NEW YORK
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THE DEAR BOYS AND GIRLS

CLASS OF '11

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PREFACE

Recognizing the limitations of stage properties for many amateur performances, simplicity of setting was kept in mind. Staging, as worked out in the first presentation of the two comedies, might be suggestive and helpful.

THE CAVE

The outdoor effect of Acts I and III was given by forest boughs. Boughs concealed the cave entrance, which was placed in upper right corner of stage. Two boxes arranged as steps and covered with green material and leaves gave the appearance of ascending the hillside to the cave entrance. Two logs for lower right and for lower left and a stump for left centre were easily secured.

In Act II, a plain dark setting was used. Boxes draped with gray material simulated rocks and stalagmite.

THE WOMAN'S MASQUERADE

A room furnished as a gymnasium was decorated with college pennants. The costumes were easily devised by the cast.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

MAX PAYNE, a senior, an economist who hates poetry.
HOWARD HINES, a senior geologist, tolerant of poetry.
GIFFORD GRIMM, a junior zoölogist.
JAMES MILFORD, a medic.
HARRIET HELEN MOORE, a senior, whole-hearted, heart-whole(?).
MAME ELDRIDGE, an enthusiastic freshman.
LUCILE PAYNE, a senior, twin sister to the economist, very poetical.
GRACE BRIGHTON, a sophomore interested in zoölogy.

THE CAVE

ACT I.

SCENE: A rolling pasture field.

(*A break between some bushes shows the mouth of the cave. The party approaches,* PAYNE *taking long steps to keep by the side of* MISS ELDRIDGE, *who trips along hurriedly.* HINES *and* MISS PAYNE *are looking closely at a stone he has picked up.* MILFORD, *engineered by* HARRIET HELEN, *brings up the rear, carrying a large market basket.*)

MAME (*Enthusiastically*): Isn't it a dear of a spot. The bushes are too lovely for anything. (*She looks down the mouth*) But my, it's dark and scary.

HARRIET HELEN (*Peering into the opening*): And is that it? That great mud hole?

LUCILE: What did you think 'twould be? An entrance held up by Doric columns and decorated with a classic frieze? What do you think this is?

A Parthenon? Aren't the fields lovely? Green hillocks and autumn fields—happy autumn fields!

MAX: Help! Help! She's just ready to have another fit. Somebody say something quick! When she looks like that it's bound to be "melancholy days," "The Psalm of Life," or stanzas from "Thanatopsis."

LUCILE: Idiot! "Thanatopsis" isn't written in stanzas.

HARRIET HELEN: Kindergartners! When I get you back to Evansville I'll have your mother spank you. Which one of you twins does she do first?

LUCILE: Well, he makes me tired. I have a right to rave over Browning and Shakespeare if I will. He talks economy! Economy! Will not read Burns! Hasn't even imagination enough to read Burns!

HARRIET HELEN: Sh—Sh!

LUCILE: It's true. I suppose he thinks Bobby should have raised corn on a Scotland hill and made a fortune in pork. He might at least practise what he preaches! Be economical and stop wasting his breath!

HINES: Come! Come! Let's all be tolerant. We can't all see the same. The thing that interests me in this cave is the rock formation. If Lucile's poetical bent brings visions of Cleopatra and Æneas in the cave, that's her affair.

MAME (*Who remembers her Virgil, exclaims*): Poor Dido! (*And smothers a giggle.*)

HARRIET HELEN: Lead them to the mud. It's the only way to cool this poetic ardor.

MAX: I'm going down.

(*He disappears behind the bushes. The others group around the mouth.* MILFORD, *in his interest, lets the basket hang tilted.*)

HARRIET HELEN: Hold the basket straight. You'll spill the salad. (*To* MAME) Those the excursion has joined together let no man put asunder. Go on.

MAME: Oh I'm afraid!

HARRIET: Afraid of what? Come, Lucile. (*They start down.*)

MAX (*From within*): Hold on, there! Don't come now. You girls stay where you are.

MAME: Perhaps he's met some animal. Some

HARRIET: Infant.

LUCILE: Oh what is it? The bears in "A Winter's Tale" came out of a cave. Didn't they, Mame? Max, brother, are you sure you won't get killed? Answer me! Answer me at once! I'm coming.

MAX: Don't be a silly goose. Wait a minute.

LUCILE: Wait a minute? A minute's a century! Oh, dear!

MAX: Shut up!

HINES: You be thoughtful enough to tell us what's wrong. The girls are scared.

HARRIET HELEN: I'm not. (PAYNE *emerges,*

having changed his trousers for a pair of light corduroys. HARRIET HELEN *checks a sigh of relief*) And is the mud that thick? Oh, you mud-pie bakers, you'll have a good time.

LUCILE: You've mud on the brain, Harriet. Didn't you ever see corduroys?

(MISS BRIGHTON *and* MR. GRIMM *near the group. He swings a butterfly net.*)

HARRIET HELEN: Well, on my life! He should do rapid-change stunts in vaudeville. How the chameleons down there must have stared. We'd better go down, for if it were done when 'twere done, it were well it were done in a jiffy. Put the basket behind the bushes. Now for the chameleons.

GRACE (*To* GRIMM): Are there creatures there? Harriet says chameleons. Why, they're creeping things. It gives me cold chills! Do creatures live in caves?

GRIMM: Sometimes in Indiana caves Lasiurus borealis and amphibians are found.

GRACE: Are they dreadful?

GRIMM: Dreadful as their names.

MAX (*Reaches a hand for* MISS ELDRIDGE): Come down into the deep, dark——

MAME: I'm so afraid.

MAX (*Softly*): With me?

MAME: Not very.

HARRIET (*Who overhears*): So tender! So trusting! Come, Mr. Milford. (*They start down. She turns and throws kisses in different directions*)

I blow you a kiss, O Southwind. Yellow sunbeams, here is another! Autumn trees, for the love I bear you, one, two, three. Vain, beautiful world, farewell. (*Descends.*)

LUCILE (*At the mouth*): I feel as the child Robert Louis must have felt when he left the farm:

"To house and garden, field and lawn,
The meadow gates we swung upon,
To pump and stable, tree and swing,
Good-bye, good-bye, to everything."

HINES: It's much like "Everyman" going down into the house of death.

MAX (*Within*): Come on, you English guns! You sharks of poesy!

Exit LUCILE *and* HINES.

GRACE: Chameleons, death, the grave, sharks, amphibians, aurora borealis! They give me creeps. Let's stay up in the sunshine with the butterflies.

HINES (*Within*): Last call for lunch.

HARRIET: Menu's bread and milk, or plain milk in bottles, if preferred.

GRIMM: Hoot on! We're not coming.

GRACE (*Perches on stump*): Plain milk in bottles. Harriet Helen makes me howl. She's surely original. To her the world's a great kindergarten. I fancy she sings lullabies to her mother.

GRIMM: I guess she tried a stunt like that with Max. It caused a terrific split up.

GRACE: Max? I don't understand. They're good friends.

GRIMM: Friends! In high school they had the most terrific case. He's crazy as a bedbug about her.

GRACE: Is your figure from bugology? Your tenses are as funny. Had a case. Past tense. If he's still crazy, why isn't the case present tense?

GRIMM: Didn't Lucile tell you?

GRACE: Not a word. Perhaps she doesn't know. Queer, though. She rooms with Harriet. Worships her. She's dreadfully fond of her brother. Did you ever notice how they fight? But Harriet's the kind that says nothing.

GRIMM: She talks all the time.

GRACE: Oh no! At least she doesn't talk about the things she thinks most about. But I'm mum till I hear the story.

GRIMM: It's not much of a story. I'm trusting you.

GRACE: Thanks.

GRIMM: 'Twas a kid case. 'Awfully serious. But in their senior year Harriet went bughouse over a new English teacher.

GRACE: More bugology! Go on! Go on!

GRIMM: Max insists that Harriet was hypnotized. Miss English poured in dreams, theories; made Harriet believe she was a bud of genius; said she must be polished, must think of nothing but the voices. Harriet decided if she needed polishing,

Max needed it powerfully bad. So she cut out the case and told him to pack for college. Wouldn't hear a word. Miss English had said they were too young for the ideal, divine—enni, meni, mini, mo—Vocabulary fails me.

GRACE (*Laughing*): Go on.

GRIMM: Then Lucile was bound to go with her brother and Harriet was bound to go with Lucile. It's a hopeless mix. Max went plum daffy when Jim King called on her. Didn't eat! He engineered this thing so Milford would ask her. If being still is a proof of thinking, Milford's going some. But he's safe. He's engaged. Max flirts dreadfully with the freshman. It's too deep for me. I think really they're crazy.

GRACE: How romantic. The conclusion's funny. If a fellow can't understand another chap, he always calls him crazy.

GRIMM: Guess that's right. Oh, look yonder. I believe that's a milkweed monarch. I'll catch the monarch for the queen.

GRACE: Of butterflies? If one were a butterfly there'd be no misunderstandings. I think 'twould be a dream to be a butterfly and flit from flower to flower all through the day, to fan the air of morning sweet with rose breath.

GRIMM: A poem of the morning. Imagine you are the queen of butterflies. I'll be a milkweed monarch. The queen comes in. I'd greet her proudly before the courtiers, but when they'd fled

away to darkness, or, better say, had gone to explore Truitt's cave, I'd kiss her slender—— (*Attempts to secure her hand.*)

GRACE: Please—I'll manage the hand. You're crazy.

GRIMM: You should give me a chance to make myself understood.

GRACE: No! I don't like your figure. It smacks of bugology. You're not so gentle as you talk. If I were a milkweed monarch you'd stick me in a chloroform bottle. No, thanks! Oh, that is a beauty. You'd better catch him. There he comes. Quick, get him. (GRIMM *stands ready to catch the butterfly.*)

CURTAIN.

ACT II.

SCENE: *A large room in the Cave.*

(*The walls show barren and dark in the glare of the candles that the boys carry. Rocks are scattered on the floor.* HINES *and* LUCILE *examine a broken stalagmite.* MAX *and* MAME *are seated on a big stone. In the centre* HARRIET HELEN *stands tiptoe on a rock reading the inscriptions on the walls of the cave.* MILFORD *dutifully holds his candle high.*)

HARRIET: I wonder if it's a rule for all insane cells to have a record of its past inmates? Please light another candle for me. You're too short. We're not the first imbeciles. Jeremiah Stubbins '70. He lives in our town. Has been old and gray ever since I could remember. He's such a wise old man. Seems so wise now. Alas! the follies of youth! Oh, kidlets, what do you know. (*She tiptoes higher and looks carefully*) Yes, it is! What do you know about this? Our high school superintendent and his frau. (HARRIET *sits down on the rock quite aghast*) Our dignified professor in a game like this! Our high school superintendent

crawling through this ooze! I'm dumb! His wife! I'm speechless with amazement.

LUCILE: She might have been here, but he never was. Don't you recall the little hole we crawled through back there? He'd have to fast for a month to reduce the embonpoint.

HARRIET: My lambs, there's hope for us. Our heroes are fallen. Our heroes are fallen—are fallen like broken statues. Smash! Bang! (*She illustrates by throwing a rock on the floor.*)

MAX *and* MAME *investigate the walls near them.*

MAX: I'm glad I couldn't join the married students' club when I arrived, always carving two names side by each. I'm glad I was fancy free. What an agony it would be not to know the co-eds, especially the freshmen. (HARRIET *tosses another rock. Her head has a contemptuous tilt.*)

MAME: Oh, these interesting names. They must have set upon this selfsame rock.

HARRIET: This selfsame way! Oh, joy! Love divine!

LUCILE: Don't couple me up in adamantine rock.

HARRIET: I'd advise you to show more aversion to rockists.

LUCILE (*Embarrassed*): Let's explore farther.

(HARRIET *and* MILFORD *follow* LUCILE *and* HINES *to the side of the cave.*)

HINES: I'll go first. There's a smaller room

farther in. It has more stalactites and stalagmites.

HARRIET: The only stagtight I've seen has been stagnant mud. It holds on like beggar-lice.

(HINES *gets down on his knees and starts through a low opening.*)

HARRIET: Well, you can go. I'll not.

LUCILE: Harriet's too plump. She'd stick!

HARRIET: One thing's sure. I didn't get the superfluous from blubber. I'm no Eskimo.

(LUCILE *goes through the opening.* MAX and MAME *are both perched on the centre rock.*)

MAX: Going? We haven't finished reading the asylum record yet, and we haven't carved our names.

HARRIET: I was mistaken about the cave being an asylum. It has been and continues to be an institution for feeble-minded youths. Vale. Translated freely, wallow.

(HARRIET *and* MILFORD *go through the entrance, stooping low.*)

MAME: What makes Harriet call us kids? Is she so old?

MAX: No, she's not old. She just thinks she's old. That is, I suppose she does. I don't pretend to know anything about what Harriet thinks, but I've concluded she has decided that she is very thoughtful. She's mighty loyal, though. She'd fight for Lucile; but she's too deep for me.

MAME: Isn't it romantic? (*Looks at the carving*) Just think of the interesting people who have

been here. You haven't put your initials on the rock yet.

MAX: May I put yours on? (*Works at the carving.*)

MAME: Oh, what's that whizzing? It's so uncanny. Something flew. Yonder's something black. Oh, I'm scared stiff.

MAX: You're all trembling. It was nothing but a bat, a shadow. Please don't be frightened. It's perfectly safe. (*Works at letters*) You're not scared now?

MAME: Not if you say we're safe.

MAX: Sure—we're safe. It's nothing. (*Whizz. The candle goes out. Total darkness.*)

MAME: Oh, that dreadful bat! I'm so afraid of darkness. Where are you? Oh, my! Please don't leave me.

(*A candle light gleams from the side. Max hastens to light his candle.* LUCILE *and* HINES *appear.*)

LUCILE: "How far this little candle throws its beams! So shines a good deed in a naughty," naughty, very naughty world. (*She says the last words in a wailing chant.*)

MAX: Don't yell that way. You'll knock the rocks out of the ceiling.

HINES: Oh no; the stalactites won't fall.

MAME (*With enthusiasm*): Oh, Mr. Hines, you know so many things. Please tell me. I'd love to know about the lovely stag-la-tites.

LUCILE (*Giggles*): Ask Max. He knows what they are. A pendant icicle that a candle flame might melt.

MAX: I was practising what I preach; saving tallow.

HINES: If you had let it burn you might have saved a match.

LUCILE: A match that exploded like the sound of youthful lips meeting and parting. Where's Harriet and the quiet man? Harriet! Ship ahoy! Ship ahoy!

MAX: What's wrong with you? The zoölogy prof. hasn't begun angling for blind fish from a sailing vessel. There'd be no breeze to fill the sails.

LUCILE: It seems there was breeze sufficient to extinguish the glimmer. (*Sings.*)

"Shine little glow-worm and glimmer, glimmer.
Shine little glow-worm and glimmer, glimmer."
Brother needs a light.

HINES: We'd better go. We'll all be blind as bats. We'll all be blind fish specimens, suckers, if we don't get out of here.

MAME: Please don't talk about bats. They're so alarming.

LUCILE: Oh they're poor, helpless creatures. I'll tell you the tearful ballad on their blindness.

(*She climbs up on the stalagmite.*)

On a moonless night, on a sunless day,
Down deep in the bowels of the old earth gray,

A dark-winged bat,
A happy bat
  Whistled a ragtime gay.
But two lovers kissed,
He knew what he'd missed.
  He wept his eyes away.

HINES (*Applauding*): Bravo! (*Continued and elaborate bowing by* LUCILE.)

CURTAIN.

ACT III.

SCENE: *Same as Act I.*

(MISS BRIGHTON *and* MR. GRIMM *are seated on a stump. They are very interested in each other.*)

HARRIET (*Pokes her head out of the cave entrance*): Oh, back to the earth! The sun still shines. "Oh, paradise, my soul hath longed for thee."

(*Enter* MILFORD *and* HARRIET. *She spies* GRACE *and* GRIMM, *who have returned to strait-laced postures.*)

Garden of Eden, I've found you. I know now just how Satan must have felt, when he tumbled headlong, whirling through the void and found Adam kissing Eve. (*An embarrassed pause.*) Please don't feel so bad about it. We'll return. No, we'll go around on the other side of the hill and hang ourselves. We'll do anything to oblige you, except grovel.

GRACE: Oh, we're so glad you've come. We'd almost given you up. We missed you very much.

HARRIET (*Pulls a leaf of a bush and pretends to*

write on it): His Majesty's notes: One black mark against the woman, labeled W. L., white fib.

GRIMM: I knew the mud would be fierce. It's always worse after a rain. I had to have a few specimens for my collection, so we decided to catch butterflies.

HARRIET: First black cross for the man, W. L. W. L., white fib, woman leading.

GRIMM: We have three fine ones. Yonder's another. Keep your old garden, Harriet. Yonder on the milkweeds, I'll let you catch this one. See him? (*Aside to* GRACE) She'll have a good time soliloquizing.

HARRIET: So easily routed? This must be the twenty-third day of the twenty-third month. There'll be no trouble keeping them out. They spoiled the play by showing so little remorse at being routed. The cheerfulness of his tone seemed to indicate: wherever thou art, fair one, will be home, sweet home, with buckwheat cakes and 'lasses and honeymoon cereal. (*Sings.*)

Home, home, sweet, sweet home!
Be the honey but plenty—

LUCILE (*Within*): Harriet!

HARRIET: Was ist, ground-mole?

LUCILE: Call me Proserpina, and tell me, has my mother earth grown bare and cold and sad since I've been gone?

HARRIET: Come and see. Old Mother Ceres is skipping like a lambkin.

(*Enter* HINES, LUCILE, MAX *and* MAME.)

LUCILE: Isn't it glorious! It's like coming from Byron's Darkness to Browning's Home Thoughts.

"I had a dream, which was not all a dream.
The bright sun was extinguished and the stars
Did wander darkling in the eternal space,
Rayless and pathless . . ."

"Oh, to be in England
Now that April's there;
And whoever wakes in England
Sees, some morning, unaware,
That the lowest boughs and the brush-wood sheaf . . ."

MAX: Cheese it! She didn't seem to be feeling very bad down in the depth. She didn't cut loose any of these classic symptoms of agony. She'd better be returned.

HARRIET: Proserpina can't be sent back unless she ate something in Hades.

LUCILE: Max gave me a chocolate bon-bon. I fed it to the blind fishes. You should have seen them gobble it! I 'fess, I did chew a bit of candle to know whether it was paraffine, but Max's thoughtfulness will ransom me. He blew his light out, sat in darkness, and saved more candle than I devoured.

MAME: 'Twas a dreadful old bat. The candles made such frightful shadows, I was terrified.

HINES: Shadows that crept closer and closer together, and finally met with a loud report—a smack. Queer shadows! Dear shadows!

MAX: And he studied poetry!

HARRIET: Hiney, you'd better not talk. Wait till I get my lantern and hunt for an honest man. Match, please, Mr. Milford. (*She has a hard time lighting match. Strikes it on* HINES' *shirt sleeve.*)

HINES: Ouch! What're you up to?

HARRIET: Hiney, come here. Look, people! Behold four finger marks on his left cheek—four, muddy, tapering fingers.

HINES: 'Taint so, Harriet. You're the worst ever.

HARRIET: Come, Lucile, dear. Cinderella, come and see if your little fingers don't fit this dainty glove. Come.

LUCILE: I'll not. You're silly, Harriet.

HINES: I remember now. I sat down on a stalagmite in the inner room. I was telling Lucile how they were formed. Got rattled. Had to meditate. When I meditate, I always hold my head.

HARRIET: Pretty story! The fingers aren't big as mine.

LUCILE: You make me tired, Harriet. Come down to the creek and wash it off, since she feels so bad about it.

HARRIET: Out, out, bright shot. (*Blows candle*) They'll not come back to the garden. (*She walks to the side.*)

MAME (*Aside to* MILFORD): Please talk. Harriet's such a tease. (*Louder*) Please don't think me stupid. Won't you tell me what a bat is? What's a stag-li—stag-mi-lite?

MILFORD: Haven't you ever seen a bat? A bat's a winged mammal. Some of the order are harmless. Others, the vampire bats, are blood-suckers.

MAME: Oh there was a bat in the cave. Hiney said something about suckers.

MILFORD: We haven't any dangerous ones here. A stalactite is a calcareous substance that oozes down from the roof of a cave and hardens.

MAME: Will I know so many things when I'm a grown-up senior? I wonder whether that brook is pebbly like the one at home.

MILFORD: We might investigate.

MAME: Let's! Harriet teases so.

HARRIET (*Poking around in the bushes*): Infant! She needn't worry! She'd enjoy being teased. 'Twouldn't be worth my breath. I wonder where he put that basket.

MAX: I wonder where they're going.

HARRIET: I presume, if you'd accompany them, you'd find out.

MAX: I don't care to butt in.

HARRIET: Then what are you hanging around here for?

MAX: Because I feel at home with a grouch. (*Runs to assist with basket.*)

HARRIET: I'll manage the basket. I'd like to know who wouldn't be grouchy. I've talked my head off. Milford didn't say a dozen words all day. I talked until I was black in the face. You get me into another such excursion, I'll punch your head. No, thanks! I can spread the table-cloth myself. I don't want any help from you.

MAX: Milford is a mighty good sort.

HARRIET: Who's discussing his character?

MAX: He isn't very interested in girls. Think he's engaged to a girl at home.

HARRIET: She must be deaf and dumb. Set these beans over at that corner.

MAX (*Obeys*): I suppose, then, he's an adept at reading lips by sense of touch.

HARRIET (*Deliberately putting buns around the table*): One, two—Lucile and Hiney; three, four—the bugology club; five, six—the youth and the freshman. You ought to know about the lip-reading stunt. You've had such recent experience. Seven, eight—lay them straight.

MAX: Lucile and Hiney are using a lot of their loose imagination on that cave affair.

HARRIET: I haven't noticed any attempt to deny it. (*A banana is thrown violently.*)

MAX: I owe them no explanation. It's none of their business. I'm old enough to have discovered a fact or two. If you want folks to believe a thing,

deny it. We were sitting on the rock in the centre when a bat whizzed by.

HARRIET: Pardon me. Would you mind meditating silently. I'm not interested in the escapade. It's none of my business.

MAX: Perhaps——

HARRIET: Have a hunk of devil's food. Occupy your mouth with that or I'll give you a piece of my mind. It won't be trimmed with caramel icing, either. I wonder where they got the stuff. I can get lovely cake of the quaint little woman at the exchange. But what is a woman when the woman is wandering with a man, not with the man? The happiness of the world lost by an adjective.

MAX: Harriet——

HARRIET: Pardon me, keep still.

MAX: Who appointed you boss, Miss Tyrant?

HARRIET: Boss? You need a boss. You haven't a particle of common sense, or you wouldn't be getting up such a terrific case. I'll give you a bit of motherly advice. You have to make good. You're obligated to your father for college. He told me so. Don't know why he told me. It's nothing to me.

If the boys didn't have the experience of digging into their jeans for last dimes, married students' club would have to convene on Dunn's meadow; if they didn't occasionally have a gentle reminder to hold their horses and not spend so much of father's lucre, the university could have a chair of theology

supported by marriage fees. It's true, statue of melancholy.

MAX: It's easy talking, Harriet Moore. You girls don't know how up fer-ninst it a fellow is sometimes. You, at most, support yourself and wait for a man to come along.

HARRIET: That we may grow hideous and uninteresting while being supported. What do you know about it? You talk like a grandfather discussing the days when slavery was thought divinely ordered, when consumption was poetical. Tragedian! Really, if you feel so bad, shut your eyes, imagine I'm the fair one. I'll let you hold my hand for half an hour. Let loose my hand!

MAX: Harriet!

HARRIET: That's my hand. You'd make love to the dean if you had the chance. I want my hand.

MAX: I want it, too. 'Twouldn't be polite not to keep what's given me. Harriet, stop talking and think.

HARRIET: You mean stop thinking and let emotion run off with me. You want to snuggle me close to you, so before I know I'll be sniffling on your shoulder.

MAX: Harriet——

HARRIET: You're a great idiot.

MAX: Of course. You've told me that before. I've the floor. You're right. A fellow ought to make good. I'm poor as a beggar, but I will make

good. I'll work like a nigger. I know a lot of love business is sentimental nonsense. There are so many chances to change one's mind. I've changed mine four or five times in as many years.

HARRIET: Have you? Let loose my hand immediately.

MAX (*Does not obey*): Be still. I'm going to have my say. About one thing I haven't changed my mind. We were sophomores. You were stunning in a red coat, a red tam. I walked home with you. My heart thumped bruised spots in my Adam's apple. Don't know how it happened, I kissed you. Your cheeks were redder than your tam. Mine were hot. I blurted out: "Harriet, you've got 'em all beat." I haven't changed my mind.

HARRIET: Max, please let go my hand. Mother should have spanked me. I should have slapped you. I suppose I should. Oh, I'm all mixed up as to the right, to the wrong. I'm a great idiot. I hate myself.

MAX: The right is easy, Harriet.

HARRIET: Yes, for a man. Right, is it, to waste time with freshman girls, to kiss them in caves? It's no question as to who you'd kiss.

MAX: Not if you'd let me.

HARRIET: You did blow out the candle. That's too much. I despise you.

MAX: That's evil for good then, honey. Forget it. Let the past bury its dead.

HARRIET (*Softly*): Please let loose my hand.

(*Freed, she busies herself with the table. Then, with a whimsical smile*) Max, that isn't all the poem.

MAX: Act in the living present, dear?

HARRIET: This hill's conspicuous.

MAX: Wait a minute, honey, I'll blow out the sun.

HARRIET: Look out, you'll step on the devil's food.

MAX: First good I ever found in poetry. I had six lickings over that "Psalm of Life." 'Twas worth 'em.

HARRIET: Let loose of me. Please, dear. I must fix the table. It's all awry. You've upset this lovely devil's food.

THE END.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

ARTHUR EATON, as CAPTAIN BUNNY, a foot-ball hero.

WILLIAM PERCIVAL, as THE CATCHER, wearer of the "I."

CHESTER HARDISON, as THE WIDOW.

HOWARD COPLEY, as THE SPINSTER.

MARY DICKERSON, as QUEEN ELIZABETH.

HAZEL HEADY, Eaton's cousin, as GRETCHEN.

SARA NELSON, secretary of the Woman's League and Hazel's room-mate, as PRISCILLA.

ANICE COOMBS.

HELEN GREATHEART.

LITTLE RED RIDING-HOOD.

LITTLE BOPEEP.

THE GOLD DUST TWINS.

BUSTER BROWN.

CHIEF CORN-COB.

POCAHONTAS.

'TOTHER *and* 'TAINT (girls dressed backwards: holes for eyes are cut in the crowns of their sunbonnets).

THE WOMAN'S MASQUERADE

IN ONE ACT.

SCENE: A Gymnasium.

(*Around the walls are Indian clubs. A trapeze swings near the centre. Horizontal bars sit to the right.* PRISCILLA *stands at the door to inspect cards presented by guests. Enter* QUEEN ELIZABETH *and* POCAHONTAS *followed by the* GOLD DUST TWINS. *One of the* TWINS *picks up* QUEEN ELIZABETH'S *train; the other takes hold of the fringe on the skirt of the Indian, but is cuffed for her pains. Enter* GRETCHEN, *who motions* PRISCILLA *aside.*)

GRETCHEN: Has Mary Dickerson come yet?

PRISCILLA: Yes, she's Queen Elizabeth. If anyone suspects us, I'm disgraced forever.

GRETCHEN: Bosh! It's all fun. Let the boys have a good time. 'Twont hurt us.

(*Two girls wearing placards labelled* 'TOTHER and 'TAINT *enter. The* GOLD DUST TWINS *follow*

them around with a rug, which they lay back of 'TOTHER *and* 'TAINT *each time they stop, motioning them to step over it. Finally in disgust the* TWINS *walk backwards, put the rug away and accompany* 'TOTHER *and* 'TAINT *in their promenade.* 'TOTHER *and* 'TAINT *bow to* GRETCHEN *and kneel to* QUEEN ELIZABETH. *The* TWINS *essay the same feats backwards, but give up the last with wry grimaces.* LITTLE RED RIDING-HOOD *comes in on the arm of* BUSTER BROWN. *The* GOLD DUST TWINS *escort them to the awful presence of* 'TAINT *and* 'TOTHER. GRETCHEN *in the centre approaches* QUEEN ELIZABETH and *speaks in a thin, disguised voice.*)

GRETCHEN: Königen Elsbeth, was denken sie von Herrn Buster Brown?

ELIZABETH (*in deep-pitched voice*): I'd chase him out of my court.

GRETCHEN (*in natural tone*): I believe you're Mary Dickerson.

QUEEN ELIZABETH: You're Hazel Heady, but you guessed wrong.

GRETCHEN: Your good figure gives you away; your walk. At first I thought you were a man.

ELIZABETH: I should hope not. The costumes are ridiculous. Look at those twins. Suppose some fellow should peep. It's shocking. Three or four climbed up in the tower of the Student Building last Panthygatric.

GRETCHEN: I think that's base, but I would ad-

mire a man who had courage enough, heart enough to dare this bevy on the ground floor.

ELIZABETH: I'd think he was a cheap John to come where he wasn't invited.

GRETCHEN: O, he wouldn't stay for refreshments. Just think of his courage. He's almost sure to be fired from college. That's an awful disgrace. 'Twould kill his poor mother. I could love a fellow who had that much nerve. Ich liebe dich.

ELIZABETH: Never let yourself love a man. They are perfectly heartless creatures.

GRETCHEN: Maybe they give their hearts away to women who haven't any to give in return. O, look at that!

(*She points to* LITTLE BOPEEP *who drags the* INDIAN CHIEF *with her crook. The* GOLD DUST TWINS *help her pull. The* INDIAN CHIEF *hangs on to a door; then starts forward suddenly. The three tumble. Everybody runs to* BOPEEP'S *rescue.* PRISCILLA *brushes her dress. During the excitement* CAPTAIN BUNNY, *the* CATCHER, *the* WIDOW *and the* SPINSTER, *slip in.*

CAPTAIN BUNNY (*aside*): Now you guys be gentlemen.

THE WIDOW: Great Scott, we're ladies.

BUNNY: Be gentlemenly ladies.

THE CATCHER: That's going some, Cap.

THE SPINSTER: I can do it, Captain. I'm a Suffragette, taxed without representation. Hello!

Here's brown-eyed Hazel. Misnomer, dear little Dutch.

GRETCHEN: Don't talk. (*To Bunny.*) Mary's Queen Elizabeth. I've pumped her full of nonsense. She thinks men enter here on pain of death.

BUNNY: You're a brick, Coz. (*The four boys move on.*)

PRISCILLA (*rushes up to* GRETCHEN *and says in a scared voice*): O, they're in.

GRETCHEN: You didn't let them in.

PRISCILLA: No, but I'm responsible.

GRETCHEN: Dummkopf! Don't let your conscience hurt you. You're only playing the Puritan. We're doing that love-sick Art a good turn. If I were a man and a girl would do such a brainless thing as Mary's done, I'd let her go straight to. He grew pale; looked like a funeral. I planned this escapade to keep from wearing mourning. Can't afford it. I talked with her just now; raved over a fellow who'd dare to come here; pictured him as a hero. She moaned, "Never love a man." Mary's so deucedly conventional, she'll think the sheriff will nab him sure. O, I know her! If she didn't feel she had him wrapped around her little finger, she'd stop her craziness. O, I know her! She'll come to her senses. If he gets chicken-hearted, I'll disown him. Then if he does die of a cracked cardia, I can still wear my gay glad rags.

PRISCILLA: Disown him? Who'll own us? Those girls dressed as men will never speak to us again.

GRETCHEN: Bosh! Skirts don't convince anyone that women are monopeds. Go to your door and keep the man in the moon out. Aufwiedersehen.

BUNNY (*approaches* ELIZABETH, *turns and speaks to her hastily*): Beg pardon. (*He rushes over to the trapeze and succeeds in stopping the* WIDOW, *who is swinging gayly with flying veil,* the TWINS *assisting. He pulls the* WIDOW *aside*): Stay away from that trapeze. They'll know you're a man.

ELIZABETH: O, that was a man's voice. It sounded like his voice. Should I give the alarm?

BUNNY (*returns to her side*): Don't yell. I'm Art Eaton.

ELIZABETH: What are you doing here? You'll get caught. The dean will fire you.

BUNNY: I know. That's why I'm here. If you must treat me so absurdly, I'm not going to stay in college. Please excuse me.

(*He hurries over and pulls the* SPINSTER, *who is merrily swinging her feet from the horizontal bars, to one side.*)

BUNNY: Haven't you any sense. Only fellows straddle around like that.

ELIZABETH: O, my heart! What shall I do? He had no business forgetting the party for that poky old History Club. I waited two whole hours. The girls at the house all smiled. I'll never speak to him again.

BUNNY (*to* ELIZABETH): In five minutes those fellows will have the work done. They'll know we're men. Then I'll unmask; to-morrow pack my trunk. I can't stand this. Remorse will kill me.

ELIZABETH: I haven't decided yet whether to report you to the dean or not. You deserve no consideration. We'll walk around the room, while I think.

(*The* WIDOW *comes to the front of the stage and sits down on a stool. Her attitude betrays evident distress.* BOPEEP *and* RED RIDING-HOOD *approach her.*)

BOPEEP: I believe she feels worse about her husband than I do about my sheep. Poor dear! (*Caressingly, she pats the* WIDOW'S *shoulders.*)

(*The* SPINSTER *draws a stool near and sits down, digs a handkerchief out of her pocket and applies it vigorously to the eye-holes in her mask.*)

RED RIDING-HOOD (*to the* SPINSTER): This one, too, is sad. 'Tis as tragic not to find a man as to bury one. Don't feel so bad. Don't give up hope. (*Caresses her.*)

BOPEEP: How long has your poor husband been dead? He was a kind man, I know. (*The* WIDOW *groans.*) What a large groan. (*She puts both arms around the* WIDOW, *whose attitude is not so full of distress.*)

RED RIDING-HOOD (*to the* SPINSTER): Why don't you try a matrimonial agency? (*The* SPINSTER *sobs*) O, poor dear! He'll sure come. (*She puts both arms around the* SPINSTER, *who retaliates.* RED RIDING-HOOD *rubs the* SPINSTER'S *chin.*) Goodness, what's wrong with your chin? It's frightfully rough.

BOPEEP (*to* RED RIDING-HOOD): Suspect it's a wolf in your grandmother's dress. (*The* CATCHER *comes up and stands with arms enticingly akimbo.*) We'd better go with this. (*They slip their arms through the* CATCHER'S *and walk off with him.*)

THE SPINSTER: There was some class to that. Yes, now. I thought she'd be next when she rubbed my chin. Good thing I didn't use my botany razor this time. O you auto-strap!

THE WIDOW: Wait until I get him home. I'll fix him.

THE SPINSTER: They'd have gone away soon, even if he hadn't come.

THE WIDOW: That isn't the only crow I have to pick with him. I can hardly breathe. Can you?

THE SPINSTER: Fair to middling.

THE WIDOW: Middling? I'm in agony. I couldn't get into this rig, so Bill harnessed me. He put his foot against me. I hung on to the door-knob. Wait till I get my lungs full, I'll spoil his face for him.

THE SPINSTER: My armor doesn't hurt much,

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but I've a frightful cramp in my foot. These pumps are too short. Don't they look funny? (*Surveys them.*)

THE WIDOW: Hold on! This is a masquerade, not a vaudeville. Not so high with your skirt. Let's flirt with the Twins. Maybe I'll forget this oppressed feeling. O, my floating ribs.

(ELIZABETH *and* BUNNY *approach the centre.*)

ELIZABETH: Well, I won't tell the dean, but you'd better go. Think how you'll disgrace your mother, your father, the University, your friends.

BUNNY: Mother thinks everything I do is itsky. Dad won't care; he thinks I'm wasting my time anyway. One poor mutt can't disgrace the great institutions of the University. As for my friends —I haven't any I care for, since you turned me down.

ELIZABETH: Anyone who has any sense of the proprieties would turn you down. I'd accepted an invitation to Kappi Chi. An important engagement. You forgot it and chased off to a club meeting, that comes twice each month. What was I to do? Tell the girls that a man engaged to me let me sit at home waiting for two solid hours; cared so much for me that he preferred the intellectual lights of History Club to my stupid presence; then after all the waiting I stayed at home. I wouldn't do that, so I told them we'd broken our engagement the day before the party.

BUNNY: You didn't need to tell them anything.

Did it make it any better? 'Twas the height of absurdity.

ELIZABETH: You're very prudent, tricked out at a girls' masquerade ball.

BUNNY: You made it possible. It's absurdity against absurdity.

GRETCHEN (*approaches them*): Pardon me. Is she next? The Widow's given this thing away. Art Eaton, what are you doing here? You'd better get out of this. You'll kill your mother. Some of the girls are suspicious. The Twins insist that you don't look right from the feet to the knees.

ELIZABETH: Hazel, make him go.

GRETCHEN: Mary, you make him go. Art, you'd better chase over and keep the Widow still. Come on. (*Removed to a little distance* GRETCHEN *speaks*). She's weakening. You lose your courage and I'll never speak to you again. I don't think she's worth it, but since you do, make good or you're no cousin of mine. It's a fish story about the Widow. The Catcher's making a fearful, wonderful impression with those Indian clubs. I should not have let them come, but I'll manage them.

ELIZABETH: I think my heart's breaking.

(BUNNY *returns to her. There is a confusion near the door.* ANICE COOMBS *and* HELEN GREATHEART *rush in out of breath.*)

HELEN: Somebody locked us in our room.

ANICE: And stole our masquerade outfits.

HELEN: We think some men have them.

ANICE: We climbed down the porch posts.

HELEN: We almost broke our necks. Couldn't make anybody hear.

ANICE: Hazel Heady did it. She's in-in-incorrigible.

GRETCHEN (*very composed*): Come here and get your breath before you try to talk. What's wrong with you? You're making serious charges. There are a dozen girls in the house. Another dozen may come in at pleasure. You jump at conclusions without thinking.

HELEN: Well, we think it was you.

GRETCHEN: You can't prove feelings.

HELEN: O, there goes my widow suit! (*The* WIDOW *runs through the door. The* SPINSTER *limps in hot pursuit after her.*)

ANICE: There's my old maid outfit. I knew she helped some men.

GRETCHEN: Use your head, Anice.

ANICE: I'm going to call up the dean.

GRETCHEN: You'd better wait till you get your breath.

BOPEEP: I'll call her. Things are at a pretty pass when one can't tell who they're hugging.

(*The* CATCHER *edges to a side door and makes an exit, throwing a gay kiss at* RED RIDING-HOOD *as he goes. Everybody runs to the door and looks after him. The* INDIAN CHIEF *hangs on to the* TWINS *to keep them from giving chase.*)

GRETCHEN (*by a window*): Here he goes. Down toward Forest Place. See him? (*The masqueraders crowd to window.*)

GRETCHEN (*by another window*): Yonder's the sorrowful duet.

CHORUS: Where? (*They gather at second window.*)

(GRETCHEN *comes to centre and watches the two on the right.*)

BUNNY (*centre right*): All have gone. Friends deserted. I'm in for it.

ELIZABETH (*hysterically*): O, what shall we do? There's the door.

BOPEEP (*reënters*): The dean says unmask. (*All fumble with masks.* BUNNY *edges toward door, tugging at his mask.*)

ELIZABETH: O, Arthur; what are you going to do?

BUNNY: Unmask. Take off your mask.

ELIZABETH: Merciful goodness, if you love me, don't.

BUNNY: That isn't the question.

ELIZABETH: Then because I love you.

BUNNY: Going! See you to-morrow, dearest. (*Puts his arm around her. Then rushes out.*)

ELIZABETH: O, my heart. (*Unmasks.*)

BOPEEP: There went another man. Mary Dickerson, he had his arm around you.

ELIZABETH (*pained and innocent*): I don't be-

lieve it. Don't you think I'd know when a man had his arm around me?

GRETCHEN: Besides Bopeep was loving a man strenuously, if the Widow was a man. (*Softly.*) They're gone, thank goodness. Elizabeth, I say on with the dance, let joy be unconfined. Come, coz, you and I will lead the grand march. (*Grand March.*)

CURTAIN.

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